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What is claimed is:

1   1. A method comprising:

2   establishing an agreement with a customer to provide X units of a product for an

3   agreement price;

4   arranging with a retailer to have the product redeemed at the retailer; and

5   receiving data indicating a redemption of Y units of the product,

6   wherein Y is a non-integer.

1   2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the agreement price is less than a current

2   retail price offered by the retailer for the product.

1   3. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

2   receiving from the customer an offer to purchase the product for the agreement price;

3   and

4   indicating an acceptance of the offer.

1   4. A method according to Claim 3, further comprising:

2   determining whether to indicate the acceptance based on a difference between the

3   agreement price and a settlement price to be paid to the retailer.

1   5. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

2   determining a difference between the agreement price and a settlement price to be

3   paid to the retailer; and

4   identifying a subsidy offer greater than the difference.

1   6. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

2   receiving from the customer a payment equal to the agreement price.

1   7. A method according to Claim 6, wherein the payment is received

2   in a plurality of installments.

1   8. A method according to Claim 6, wherein the payment is received after the X units

2   of the product are redeemed.

1   9. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

2   paying the retailer a settlement amount after receiving the data indicating the

3   redemption.

1   10. A method according to Claim 9, wherein the agreement price is a price per unit of

2   the product, and the settlement amount is equal to Y multiplied by (a current retail price per

3   unit of the product minus the agreement price).

1   11. A method according to Claim 10, further comprising receiving from the customer

2   a payment equal to X multiplied by the agreement price.

1   12. A method according to Claim 10, wherein the agreement price is a price per unit

2   of the product, and the settlement amount is equal to Y multiplied by (a predetermined price

3   per unit of the product minus the agreement price).

1   13. A method according to Claim 12, further comprising receiving from the customer

2   a payment equal to X multiplied by the agreement price.

1   14. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

2   paying the customer an amount paid by the customer to the retailer minus (the

3   agreement price multiplied by Y),

4   wherein the agreement price is a price per unit of the product.

1   15. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

2   transmitting to the retailer the agreement to provide X units of the product for the

3   agreement price.

1   16. A method according to Claim 1., further comprising:

2   receiving from the retailer a request for authorization to provide the product to the

3   customer.

1   17. A method according to Claim 16, further comprising:

2   retrieving agreement information corresponding to the agreement; and

3   transmitting an authorization to the retailer to provide the product to the customer.

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1   18. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

2   updating data indicating a quantity remaining under the agreement based on the

3 received data.

1   19. A method to provide a product to a customer, comprising:

2   receiving a redemption identifier;

3   retrieving data indicating an agreement to provide X units of a product for a customer-

4 specified agreement price based on the redemption identifier;

5   authorizing a redemption of up to X units of the product; and

6   receiving data indicating a redemption of Y units of the product,

7   wherein Y is a non-integer.

1   20. A method to provide a product to a customer, comprising:

2   receiving a redemption identifier from a customer;

3   transmitting the redemption identifier to a controller;

4   receiving authorization from the controller to provide up to X units of a product to the

5 customer;

6   controlling a redemption device to stop dispensing the product after X units of the

7 product have been dispensed; and

8   determining whether the customer requests additional units of the product.

1   21. A method to provide a product to a customer, comprising:

2   controlling a redemption device to stop dispensing a product after X units of the

3 product have been dispensed;

4   establishing an agreement with a customer to redeem additional units of the product

5 for an agreement price;

6   storing information corresponding to the agreement; and

7   providing the additional units to the customer.

1   22. A method to provide a product to a customer, comprising:

2   receiving a redemption identifier from a customer;

3   retrieving data indicating an agreement to provide X units of a product for a customer-

4 specified agreement price based on the redemption identifier; and

5   providing Y units of the product to the customer,

6   wherein Y is a non-integer.

1   23. A method according to Claim 22, further comprising receiving the data indicating

2   an agreement to provide X units of a product for a customer-specified agreement price from a

3   controller.

1   24. A method according to Claim 22, further comprising determining a quantity

2   remaining under the agreement.

1   25. A method according to Claim 24, further comprising transmitting the determined

2   quantity remaining to the customer.

1   26. A method according to Claim 24, further comprising:

2   controlling a product redemption device to stop dispensing the product once the

3   quantity remaining has been redeemed.

1   27. A method according to Claim 26, further comprising receiving an offer to

2   purchase Z units of the product for the customer-specified agreement price once the quantity

3   remaining has been redeemed.

1   28. A method according to Claim 26, further comprising receiving an offer to

2   purchase X units of the product for a second customer-specified agreement price once the

3   quantity remaining has been redeemed.

1   29. A method according to Claim 26, further comprising receiving an offer to

2   purchase Z units of the product for a second customer-specified agreement price once the

3   quantity remaining has been redeemed.

1   30. A method according to Claim 26, further comprising receiving an offer to

2   purchase X units of the product for the customer-specified agreement price once the quantity

3   remaining has been redeemed.

1   31. A method according to Claim 22, further comprising:

2   determining that an amount of the product redeemed by the customer exceeds a

3   quantity remaining under the agreement.

1   32. A method according to Claim 31, further comprising:

2   calculating a difference between the amount of the product redeemed and the quantity

3   remaining under the agreement; and

4   extracting a payment from the customer equal to the difference multiplied by a retail

5   price for the product.

1   33. A method according to Claim 31, further comprising:

2   calculating a difference between the amount of the product redeemed and the quantity

3   remaining under the agreement; and

4   extracting a payment from the customer equal to (the agreement price multiplied by

5   the quantity remaining under the agreement) plus (the difference multiplied by a retail price

6   for the product).

1   34. A method according to Claim 31, further comprising:

2   calculating a difference between the amount of the product redeemed and the quantity

3   remaining under the agreement; and

4   extracting a payment from the customer equal to (the agreement price multiplied by

5   the quantity remaining under the agreement) plus (the difference multiplied by a retail price

6   for the product) plus a penalty.

1   35. A method according to Claim 31, further comprising:

2   calculating a difference between the amount of the product redeemed and the quantity

3   remaining under the agreement; and

4   if the difference is less than a predetermined amount, extracting a payment from the

5   customer equal to the agreement price multiplied by the difference.

1   36. A method according to Claim 31, further comprising:

2   calculating a difference between the amount of the product redeemed and the quantity

3   remaining under the agreement; and

4   if the difference is less than a predetermined amount, extracting a payment from the

5   customer equal to the agreement price multiplied by the quantity redeemed.

1   37.   A method according to Claim 22, further comprising transmitting data indicating

2   the redemption of Y units to a controller.

1   38.   A method according to Claim 22, further comprising receiving a payment from

2   the customer, the payment based on a current retail price offered by the retailer per unit of the

3   product multiplied by Y.

1   39.   A method according to Claim 22, wherein the agreement price is a price per unit,

2   the method further comprising receiving a payment from the customer based on the

3   agreement price multiplied by Y.

1   40.   A method according to Claim 39, further comprising receiving a payment from a

2   third party, the payment based on Y multiplied by (a settlement price per unit established

3   with the third party minus the agreement price) .

1   41.   A method according to Claim 22, further comprising receiving a payment from a

2   third party, the payment based on a settlement price per unit established with the third party

3   multiplied by Y.

1   42.   A method according to Claim 22, further comprising transmitting data indicating

2   a received payment and the Y redeemed units to a third party.

1   43.   A method according to Claim 22, further comprising controlling a redemption

2   device to provide the product to the customer for the agreement price.

1   44.   A method according to Claim 22, further comprising updating the data indicating

2   the agreement based on the redemption.

1   45.   A method according to Claim 44, further comprising:

2   generating a second redemption identifier encoding the updated data; and

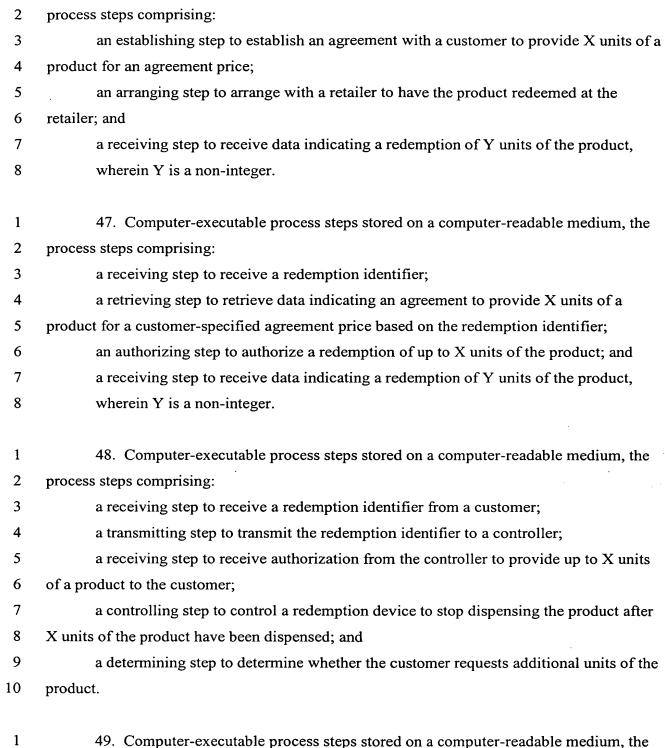3   outputting the second redemption identifier to the customer.

1   46. Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the

2   process steps comprising:

3   an establishing step to establish an agreement with a customer to provide X units of a

4   product for an agreement price;

5   an arranging step to arrange with a retailer to have the product redeemed at the

6   retailer; and

7   a receiving step to receive data indicating a redemption of Y units of the product,

8   wherein Y is a non-integer.

1   47. Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the

2   process steps comprising:

3   a receiving step to receive a redemption identifier;

4   a retrieving step to retrieve data indicating an agreement to provide X units of a

5   product for a customer-specified agreement price based on the redemption identifier;

6   an authorizing step to authorize a redemption of up to X units of the product; and

7   a receiving step to receive data indicating a redemption of Y units of the product,

8   wherein Y is a non-integer.

1   48. Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the

2   process steps comprising:

3   a receiving step to receive a redemption identifier from a customer;

4   a transmitting step to transmit the redemption identifier to a controller;

5   a receiving step to receive authorization from the controller to provide up to X units

6   of a product to the customer;

7   a controlling step to control a redemption device to stop dispensing the product after

8   X units of the product have been dispensed; and

9   a determining step to determine whether the customer requests additional units of the

10 product.

1   49. Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the

2   process steps comprising:

3   a controlling step to control a redemption device to stop dispensing a product after X

4   units of the product have been dispensed;

5   an establishing step to establish an agreement with a customer to redeem additional

6   units of the product for an agreement price;

7   a storing step to store information corresponding to the agreement; and

8   a providing step to provide the additional units to the customer.

1   50. Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the

2   process step comprising:

3   a receiving step to receive a redemption identifier from a customer;

4   a retrieving step to retrieve data indicating an agreement to provide X units of a

5   product for a customer-specified agreement price based on the redemption identifier; and

6   a providing step to provide Y units of the product to the customer,

7   wherein Y is a non-integer.

1   51. An apparatus comprising:

2   means for creating an agreement with a customer to provide X units of a product for

3   an agreement price;

4   means for planning with a retailer to have the product redeemed at the retailer; and

5   means for receiving data indicating a redemption of Y units of the product, wherein Y

6   is a non-integer.

1   52. An apparatus for providing a product to a customer, comprising:

2   means for obtaining a redemption identifier;

3   means for obtaining data indicating an agreement to provide X units of a product for a

4   customer-specified agreement price based on the redemption identifier;

5   means for allowing a redemption of up to X units of the product; and

6   means for obtaining data indicating a redemption of Y units of the product, wherein Y

7   is a non-integer.

1   53. An apparatus for providing a product to a customer, comprising:

2   means for obtaining a redemption identifier from a customer;

3   means for delivering the redemption identifier to a controller;

4   means for obtaining authorization from the controller to provide up to X units of a

5   product to the customer;

6   means for managing a redemption device to stop dispensing the product after X units

7   of the product have been dispensed; and

8   means for identifying whether the customer requests additional units of the product.

1   54. An apparatus for providing a product to a customer, comprising:

2   means for managing a redemption device to stop dispensing a product after X units of

3   the product have been dispensed;

4   means for creating an agreement with a customer to redeem additional units of the

5   product for an agreement price;

6   means for saving information corresponding to the agreement; and

7   means for delivering the additional units to the customer.

1   55. An apparatus for providing a product to a customer, comprising:

2   means for obtaining a redemption identifier from a customer;

3   means for obtaining data indicating an agreement to provide X units of a product for a

4   customer-specified agreement price based on the redemption identifier; and

5   means for delivering Y units of the product to the customer, wherein Y is a non-

6   integer.

1   56. A method for redeeming a product, comprising:

2   receiving an offer to purchase a number of units of an offer product for an offer price;

3   indicating an acceptance of the offer;

4   transmitting a redemption identifier associated with the offer;

5   receiving the redemption identifier and data indicating a desired product;

6   determining if the desired product is equivalent to the offer product;

7   authorizing a redemption of the number of units of the product if the desired product

8   is equivalent to the offer product; and

9   receiving data indicating a redemption of a fractional number of units of the product,

10   the fractional number less than the number of units.

1   57. An apparatus comprising:

2   a processor; and

3   a memory in communication with the processor, the memory storing processor-

4   executable process steps,

5   wherein the processor is operative with the process steps to:

6   i) receive an offer to purchase a number of units of an offer product for an offer price;

7   ii) indicate an acceptance of the offer;

8   iii) transmit a redemption identifier associated with the offer;

9   iv) receive the redemption identifier and data indicating a desired product;

10   v) determine if the desired product is equivalent to the offer product;

11   vi) authorize a redemption of the number of units of the product if the desired product

12   is equivalent to the offer product; and

13   vii)   receive data indicating a redemption of a fractional number of units of the

14   product, the fractional number less than the number of units.